

VZCZCXRO0914
OO RUEHQU
DE RUEHPU #0266 0381713
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
O 071713Z FEB 07
FM AMEMBASSY PORT AU PRINCE
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 5297
INFO RUEATRS/DEPT OF TREASURY WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEHZH/HAITI COLLECTIVE
RUEHBR/AMEMBASSY BRASILIA 1407
RUEHSA/AMEMBASSY PRETORIA 1230
RUMIAAA/HQ USSOUTHCOM J2 MIAMI FL
RUCOWCV/CCGDSEVEN MIAMI FL//OLE/OI//

UNCLAS PORT AU PRINCE 000266

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

STATE FOR WHA/CAR
DRL
S/CRS
SOUTHCOM ALSO FOR POLAD
STATE PASS AID FOR LAC/CAR
INR/IAA (BEN-YEHUDA)
TREASURY FOR MAUREEN WAFER

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [EAID](#) [XM](#) [XL](#) [HA](#) [VE](#)
SUBJECT: CHAVEZ COMING TO HAITI?

¶1. This message is sensitive but unclassified -- protect accordingly.

¶2. (SBU) The Haitian Media on February 2 reported that Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez planned to visit Haiti as early as the following week. However, the foreign ministry's political director, Wiener Jean Baptiste, on February 5 pointed out to Poloff that the reports stemmed from an announcement made by Venezuelan Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs Rodolfo Sanz in Caracas on January 22, who promised that Haitians "will soon see President Chavez in Haiti." The Haitian foreign ministry is making no arrangements and has no knowledge of a set date for the visit, according to Jean Baptiste. Deputy Secretary General of the Presidency Raymond Jeanty also told Pol Specialist that the presidency had no knowledge of a Chavez visit.

¶3. (SBU) Comment: In March, 2006, prior to President Preval's inauguration, President Preval told visiting WHA A/S Shannon that Chavez was pushing a visit to commemorate the bicentennial of Venezuelan flag day on March 12 in Jacmel. (Venezuelan General Francisco de Miranda first flew the Venezuelan flag on his vessel in Haiti's Jacmel harbor.) Preval told A/S Shannon he would do his best to avoid Chavez, and the visit did not occur. Since Preval's inauguration, however, Haitian-Venezuelan relations have warmed considerably. Preval signed a Petrocaribe agreement within his first weeks in office, and he has made clear that he will solicit aid from any country willing to contribute. Haitian officials report that Chavez continues to aggressively court Haiti. Jean Baptiste noted that Sanz also announced a Venezuelan donation of five garbage trucks and one tanker as part of "operation pure air for Haiti," which he attributed to Chavez' earlier remarks to GoH officials that Venezuela owed a "historic debt to Haiti." (Simon Bolivar in 1816 successfully appealed to the first Haitian president, Alexandre Petion, for assistance in his fight for independence.) Preval may well soon issue an invitation to Chavez, possibly centered on the March date. End Comment.
SANDERSON